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SUBJECT: Climate Change - South African Views Post-Bangkok

REF: (A) PRETORIA 2170, (B) STATE 107536,  
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SUMMARY  
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¶1. (SBU) In an October 23 meeting with Emboffs, South African climate change negotiator Joanne Yawitch argued for:  
(1) Negotiating "within the framework that exists" rather than "reopening the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change";  
(2) Committing major public funds for mitigation and adaptation; and  
(3) Acknowledging a difference between developed and developing countries in capacity to bear the burden of reducing emissions, including large emitters like South Africa. While expressing frustration about "vague" USG proposals and EU "backtracking", Yawitch insisted the SAG is working very hard on the negotiations and expressed the belief that an agreement is possible with compromise and ambitious commitments. End Summary.

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Status of Negotiations  
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¶2. (U) Economic Minister Counselor and Environment, Science and Technology Officer met with South African climate negotiator Joanne Yawitch late the afternoon of October 23, as she prepared to travel to Washington for a meeting of the World Bank's Clean Technology Fund. As explained in Ref A, Yawitch is a Deputy Director General in the Department of Water and Environmental Affairs, responsible for national implementation of climate policy, and one of South Africa's two lead negotiators under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

¶3. (SBU) Yawitch voiced concern with what she saw as lack of progress in Bangkok, given there are "only five negotiating days left before Copenhagen". She complained that the U.S. is "negotiating with its public instead of with its partners", that USG proposals should be more specific at this point, that commitment to more public funding is essential for mitigation and adaptation, and that the EU position of "preserving the best bits of Kyoto" was unrealistic and unhelpful at this point. In South Africa's view, Kyoto must stay intact and Kyoto members should take action under that agreement, with the U.S. taking "comparable but not equivalent" action under the Bali Action Plan, and with developing countries

being assisted generously in their efforts.

14. (U) South Africa seeks to maintain a clear distinction between "developed" and "developing" countries as defined in the Convention and Bali Action Plan, considering itself a member of the developing country group and opposed to differentiation among developing countries that would group it with China.

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Mitigation - Time to Get Serious  
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15. (SBU) Yawitch expressed skepticism that the U.S. and other developed countries have gone as far as they can and should in their commitments to reduce emissions. She stated that South Africa's position is based on science, which requires countries to commit to certain reduction targets to avoid the worst consequences of climate change. In Bangkok, South Africa recommended that developed countries commit to an aggregate target of 40 percent reductions from 1990 levels by 2020. If they do not do this, Yawitch claimed, the burden of making up the difference will fall to the developing world, despite historical responsibility of developed countries for greenhouse gas emissions.

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Finance  
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16. (SBU) On financing for developing countries, Yawitch strongly reiterated the SAG argument that large infusions of public funding will be required "initially" to make interventions where markets are failing, to enable countries - including South Africa - to "get off first base". Emborffs asked how the new U.S. proposal on finance, including a provision that all developing countries would be eligible for funding, was received. Yawitch replied that the U.S.

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proposal is still too general and does not clearly identify which countries would have access to public finance, which countries would contribute to the multilateral fund, and how governance would be organized.

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Where South Africa Fits  
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16. (SBU) Yawitch argued repeatedly for USG acknowledgement of a difference between developed and developing countries' capacity to tackle emissions reductions, "even for large emitters". South Africa is concerned that it would not be eligible for public multilateral funding for mitigation actions if it is categorized as an "advanced developing country" along with China and India. Yawitch became particularly animated on the question of where South Africa fits. She said if South Africa were forced to "pay according to its emissions intensity", this would "bankrupt" the country. According to Yawitch, a GDP and emissions-based formula proposed by Mexico would have South Africa paying USD 500 million a year into such a fund. In her view, the simple ratio of tons of carbon per person in the United States and in South Africa, or even GDP per capita, does not reflect "the divides" between the two countries. She suggested the UN Human Development Index as a better measure of which countries should access assistance. (Note: The newest HDI ranking was just released, with South Africa at position 129 of 182 countries. End note.)

17. (SBU) On the other hand, Yawitch expressed frustration with the implication that developing countries could not be trusted to use funds properly. While the SAG agrees completely that strong governance systems are necessary, the assumption (Yawitch specifically mentioned the French on this point) that developing countries should not be on the board because they could not be trusted to manage money bordered on "insulting".

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NAMA Registry  
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¶18. (U) Emboffs asked Yawitch to amplify on South Africa's proposal for a "lifecycle" of nationally appropriate mitigation actions (NAMA), which received some positive interest in Bangkok. Yawitch replied that the proposal was not new, but reformatting it into a table may have made it easier to digest. The proposal addresses how developing countries can register self-funded NAMAs to have actions recognized and reported in national communications. The registration of self-funded actions would not be mandatory, nor would they be subject to the same standards of measurement, reporting, and verification (MRV) as supported actions.

¶19. (U) Yawitch provided two examples of self-funded projects in South Africa that might be registered as NAMAs: a large government program to encourage or install solar hot water heaters, or getting cars off the road with the "Gautrain", the 80-kilometer mass transit rail project under construction in the Johannesburg-Pretoria corridor. She said the first part of a project might be self-financed, but additional related projects might require assistance. Countries would register what they wanted to do and then be matched with appropriate funds.

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Long-Term Mitigation Strategy  
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¶10. (SBU) Yawitch admitted that South Africa lacks a "low carbon growth plan", but claimed that the country's Long-Term Mitigation Strategy, to which President Zuma's Cabinet reconfirmed its commitment recently, is really just a study of mitigation "potential", all contingent on identifying sufficient resources. As an example, Yawitch pointed to one of LTMS's main tenets, increasing the use of nuclear power, which is not eligible for international financing.

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What can the U.S. do?  
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¶11. (SBU) Asked her opinion of where the USG could best focus its efforts to help move the negotiations forward, Yawitch offered three suggestions that echoed the previous discussion:

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- Clearly acknowledge the distinction between developed and developing countries as defined in the Convention; do not try to reopen the parameters of the Convention;
- Find a way to negotiate within the Bali Action Plan's "subparagraph(b)(i)/(b)(ii)framework" of mitigation actions outlined for developed and developing countries; and
- Find a way to address national circumstances and capabilities in a meaningful way in terms of mitigation actions, access to finance, and technology support.

¶12. (U) Yawitch agreed to try to adjust her tight schedule during her visit to Washington for Clean Technology Fund meetings at the World Bank to allow consultation with USG counterparts. Post passed her contact information to OES Jonathan Pershing for followup.

GIPS